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ABSTRACT

This review of the status of junior high schools, prepared as a testimony for the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, argues that, despite the fact that early adolescence is a critical time in human development, schooling for young adolescents is the weakest link in the chain of public education. Middle and junior high schools are unsure of their instructional purposes, are served by the least skilled pool of professionals in public education, and are confused about the needs of their students and how to meet them. The situation calls for sweeping measures, including: (1) a review of the purposes and practices of intermediate schooling; (2) upgrading of staff; (3) the establishment of centralized data sources for professionals and policymakers; (4) the institution of a variety of schooling options; (5) the institution of programs giving young adolescents greater access to adults; (6) research into effective schools for young adolescents; (7) research into ways to alleviate the special stresses of desegregation in junior high schools; (8) the establishment of a broad spectrum of basic skills programs; (9) the provision of health screening, diagnosis and treatment, and coordinated health, guidance, and social services; and (10) more Federal funds for research on early adolescent development, schools, and other service institutions for young adolescents. (GC)

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SCHOOLING FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS: A Key Time in Secondary Education

Testimony prepared for the
Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
Carl D. Perkins
Chairman

Joan Scheff Lipsitz

January 24, 1980

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee: My name is Joan Scheff Lipsitz. I am Director of the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I have a doctorate in education, specializing in curriculum and instruction at the secondary level. I am a former language arts teacher at the high school and junior high levels. I established and ran an after-school voluntary tutoring program in reading and math skills for junior and senior high school students. I worked for six years at the Learning Institute of North Carolina on program and staff development for junior high schools. During those years I conducted a national status study for the Ford Foundation on research and programs concerning 12- to 15-year-olds in this country, in an attempt to answer the question, "Who is doing what, and where, in research and programs for young adolescents in America?" The study resulted in a report, now a book, entitled Growing Up Forgotten.

The title says it all. That is why I am here today. I am concerned that early adolescence, a crucial time in human development is the most overlooked school-age group in America. Despite the critical importance of this age group, our 10- to 15-year-olds, the intellectual and economic resources of our country are not being allocated to these young people. Our continuing ignorance about and ignoring of young adolescents reflect a deep mistrust, fear, or even dislike of young people in formative years of their lives.

Early adolescence is a time of growth and change unique in human experience. The paucity of programs appropriately serving young adolescents, the small number of professionals and policy-setters knowledgeable about and dedicated to their welfare, the small number of training programs for future professionals, the inadequate dialogue about this age group, all point to our confusion, fears and dislike.

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I am here today because I have been asked to talk about the needs of junior high-aged students and the extent to which they are or are not being met. I am also here because I believe, as a professional and as a mother of adolescents, that we must take every opportunity we can to create a new social concern for this exciting and critical time in the life of every human being. We must end the dangerous confusion and fragmentation of services for young adolescents by defining, in part through legislation about schools, how we want young people to grow up in America.

OVERVIEW

Secondary education in America is caught up in a maelstrom of contradiction. Schools, it is argued, must provide more and more services to students as the church and family weaken; but others argue that schools can do best only what they are really intended to do, and that is to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. Some say schools must return to teaching the basics; but others insist that schools must provide socialization experiences for personal fulfillment and for living in a pluralistic society. Some propose that schools stop trying to teach all students, by lowering the compulsory attendance age; but others insist that schools must institute vigorous dropout prevention programs to retain as many students as possible. Most of us argue that schools must prepare students for productive life in the marketplace; but we also insist that schools must preserve and inculcate what is best in the legacy of human civilization.

Middle and junior high schools are strangely removed from these swirls of controversy, as if existing in the eye of the storm. They are in a no-man's land in American schooling, not quite bona fide secondary schools, but not elementary schools either. They are "intermediate" schools, in limbo like the young adolescents in their charge. They have a serious identity crisis, unsure of their instructional purposes, graced by the least skilled pool of professionals in public education, and confused about the needs of their students and how to meet them.

The talent of this country is not dedicated to this age group. The early years of secondary education, the junior high years, desperately need the national attention that the early elementary grades and later years of secondary schooling receive.

Schooling for young adolescents--middle grade education--is the weakest link in the chain of public education. It is the misfortune of young adolescents that just at the point in their lives when they are seeking definition, two areas of confusion and ignorance converge: confusion about the purposes of schooling for

young adolescents and ignorance about early adolescence as a critical developmental stage in the life span.[1] The convergence of these two areas of confusion and ignorance--what a school for young adolescents should do and what a young adolescent should be--dangerously undermines the day-to-day functioning of our schools. In the senior high years we will continue to reap the bitter harvest of our neglect of middle grade schooling if we do not focus our attention on these formative years.

It is at the very least cost-ineffective to spend considerable amounts of money on the very young in the early grades of schooling without following through to make good on our investment. Likewise, it is an inefficient use of our public monies to concentrate on remediation and re-education at the time of transition into the labor market, while failing to support necessary programs in the middle grades that could reduce the need for later widespread remediation. Most importantly, it is tragic to fail to place more of our resources at a key point in education, a time of maximal growth and stress, when the possibilities for positive intervention in young people's lives are almost boundless.

Early adolescence is a time during which life-changing growth occurs. It is a time when young people begin to define themselves as social beings with a sense of commitment to their personal futures and their society. It is a time to begin considering how to function on one's own. It is a time for establishing a firm sense of racial identity and for sorting through feelings about sexual identity. It is a time when the capacity for hypothetical, abstract thought begins to develop. Physically, it is a time of the most rapid growth and change in the entire human experience. It is, in other words, a critical time of development that can determine the quality of one's future.

Why should we turn our attention to young adolescents? Because, like early childhood, it is a time of such remarkable growth and change that positive prevention and intervention are possible; because, unlike early childhood, we are overlooking early adolescence; and because the personal and societal losses that result from our neglect can no longer be ignored.

Statistics indicating considerable distress among approximately 20 percent of the young adolescent population should rivet our attention on this age group. The National Institute of Education's (NIE's) Safe School Study tells us that boys in the seventh grade of junior high schools are the most victimized of our students.[2] The only part of our population for whom first admissions to mental hospitals increased in the 1970's were adolescents under 15.[3] The only age group for which the birth rate is increasing are girls fifteen and under.[4] The incidence

of running away peaks around ages 14 and 15. Alcohol abuse is becoming a serious problem for adolescents. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports that 19 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds experience alcohol-related problems.[5] The average age of initiation to alcohol is 12.9. Sixty-two percent of seventh graders and 80 percent of eighth graders drink.[6] Beginning at age 10, there is a steady rise in youths' contact with police and courts. Studies indicate that juvenile crime begins to "bloom" during early adolescence.[7] The national school dropout rate is at about 25 percent. In North Carolina, 37 percent of students entering first grade do not complete high school. The decision to drop out of school at age 16 is often made during the preceding junior high years.

This litany of woes continues unabated, as venereal disease, drug abuse, suicide, truancy and other behaviors bearing witness to personal and social tragedy increase in incidence among young adolescents.

We do not know what role schools play in contributing to or alleviating the distress among this age group (although in some parts of the country the juvenile crime rate goes down during summer months and up during the school months). Given our inattention to young adolescents, we have barely begun to explore alternatives to current school practices that might relieve some of this expensive human suffering among a minority of the age group and, even more importantly, might enhance the healthy development of the majority of young adolescents who manage, often despite us, to cope during this time of remarkable growth and change.

We have the greatest number of alternative schools at the senior high school level and many at the elementary level. Unfortunately, we have very few alternatives at the intermediate level. As a result, we offer very little respite to young adolescents who need different school environments. Also, because of this lack of alternatives we have had almost no opportunities to learn about intermediate schooling options. We need to establish and study at least as wide a spectrum of alternatives for middle grade schooling as is available for elementary and senior high levels.

At the same time, we must insist upon the normalcy of early adolescence. The onset of puberty, with all its attending physical and behavioral changes, is all too often seen as a pathological time in life during which adults feel that all they can do is to wait it out. In fact, for the large majority this is not a time of crisis and tumultuous acting out. By assuming that it is and putting young adolescents "on hold," we fail to define what makes sense for them, what it is that

we want young adolescents to be able to do. While we need to establish alternatives to traditional schooling for some of the 20 percent or so who are distressed, we must also begin to establish a spectrum of educational opportunities for the approximately 80 percent who are coping adequately. We need to reverse our present policies and spend a greater amount of our human and financial resources on socializing and educating the young adolescents in our schools.

Young adolescents pose a unique problem for educators. The central characteristic of this age group is its diversity, caused by extreme variations in the rates of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. There is no age group that is as variable in the entire continuum of schooling. John Money has pointed out that "it is very difficult for some youngsters to be caught in that no-man's land between their chronological age and their physique age, trying to keep up their social age, their academic age, their personality age, and their psychosexual age, in conformity with their chronological age."[8] It is also very difficult to be a teacher of 25 or 45 such students, each juggling so many different and varying ages, especially since variability occurs both within each individual and among the many individuals in the class. Certainly it is also very difficult to administer a school for this age group or to be on a school board setting policy for such a school. If for no other reason than the fact of this unique variability, intermediate schooling is in need of our targeted attention. Policies and techniques that are effective with other age groups are defeated daily by this one central fact of intermediate school life: variability. And so, we must look at each educational issue as it relates specifically to the developmental characteristics of this age group. We cannot assume that what works at the elementary or senior high levels in, for instance, compensatory education, basic skills, desegregation, programs for the handicapped, vocational education, the arts, or professional development is also effective in schools for young adolescents.

Why? What is going on in the lives of young adolescents? How do schools respond to their developmental needs? We cannot set policy until we look at development.

EARLY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Intellectually, adolescence is an exhilarating time in human development because many young people acquire the capacity to think abstractly, to understand theories, theorems, values, metaphors, to think about thinking, to go beyond individual concrete facts to classifications, generalizations, and principles. Given the variability of adolescent development, some young adolescents have already acquired

these intellectual powers, others are beginning to, and others will not for several years, if ever. Chronological age, and therefore grade placement, does not assure what stage of intellectual development an individual student has attained. Unfortunately, most curricula, including most textbooks, assume a steady chronological growth. They present abstract materials prematurely for many junior high students while not encouraging the new mental capacities of students who mature rapidly.

The shift to thinking abstractly is a crucial developmental phenomenon that most school people are unaware of, a fact of life as remarkable, diverse in timing, and out of individual control as the adolescent's physical growth spurt. There is almost no recognition of this phenomenon in junior high schools. Were educators to recognize this uniquely human potential and its importance during early adolescence, schooling for young adolescents would assume an importance in our education systems that it now lacks. Curricula and teaching techniques would also be revolutionized.

Physically, early adolescence is marked by the adolescent growth spurt, the appearance of secondary sex characteristics, and the onset of puberty. At no time after birth do human beings grow as rapidly as during early adolescence. The velocity of change is unique in our experience. Because adolescence is generally viewed as a healthy time in life, we fail to do the screening necessary to insure that we have in our schools the one undeniable prerequisite for successful learning: an intact child. We also fail to give young people adequate information about their physical development. A great deal of the "inner static" that seems to keep young adolescents from attending to school work concerns their feelings about their physical change. School people for the most part function as if such change were irrelevant, thereby making themselves appear irrelevant to their students.

Above all, it is the social and emotional changes in young adolescents that are ignored or resisted by adults in schools. When asked what they like most about school, the great majority of adolescents say that school is the place where they see their friends.[9] Instead of building activities around friendships, many junior high schools constantly fight this support group, separate friends as much as possible, and thereby create distractions and behavior problems. Also, programs that select individual students for special attention or services will not be as attractive as programs that work with the peer group.

Young adolescents need to be with as diverse a mix of adults as possible. We need more programs like Philadelphia's affective education program that places adult learners in the junior high classroom, thereby giving students immediate access to adults and helping adults to gain new skills while having a calming effect on the classroom. Adults and young adolescents can and should learn side-by-side.

In our age-segregated society, it is difficult for young people to gain access to a variety of adult models. We need to get more young people out of the schools in order to learn. Many educators have similar backgrounds and cannot by themselves provide the spectrum of role models that could help expand the personal horizons of adolescents. Our credentialing procedures, combined with our tendency to keep young adolescents in the school building at all times, severely limit the experiences we provide these young people and their sense of possibility.

That sense of possibility is central to young adolescents' development. For the first time in their lives they have a sense of personal destiny.[10] They begin to define their futures. They need to explore as broad a variety of experiences as possible. A sense of future is a powerful motivator. We fail to meet the needs of this age group for defining possible futures and for making present tasks meaningful. We hand them a watered-down version of senior high school programs rather than experiences that are appropriate to their new questing for inner direction.

Part of the questing takes the form of a growing sense of commitment to a social as well as a personal destiny. Because of intellectual growth, a young adolescent can for the first time say, "I am part of a generation." Most schools fail to give junior high-aged students opportunities to make short-term commitments to be useful to their communities. There are unusual, isolated cases like the St. Paul (Minn.) Open School, where young adolescents are providing a variety of services to their community, including legal research. For the most part, we have an image of young teenagers as being irresponsible and therefore do not trust them with meaningful, responsible work; yet these are the baby-sitters of our nation!

One speaker at the national conference sponsored by the Committee for the Study of National Service (May 1979) summarized well how vital service activities are for youth below age 16: "Such service activities make schools more meaningful places in which to live and learn. They help cut down on discipline problems,

they make the curriculum more reality-based, they make values learning possible in a non-sermonistic way." They are also totally in line with what we know about early adolescent development. "The peak age for joining things, for wanting to be a part of 'project-type learning,' is age 11, not 17 or 18." Youth feel they are getting real experiences that help them with their career choices. They feel they are helped in getting answers to their pressing questions about their identity. They are given an opportunity to work with an adult who cares. They learn "the basics" through service. "There is no necessary dichotomy between basic-skills learning and service-learning."[11]

Young adolescents must be given many ways to feel competent. They are at a stage in life when their self-esteem is shaky. We must stop the "pretend teaching" and "pretend learning" going on in too many of our junior high schools. A 12-year-old who cannot read well cannot feel good about much of anything in the mainstream of our society. At a minimum, we must commit ourselves to assuring every student possible the acquisition of those skills that lead to literacy and numeracy.

But there are many ways to teach "the basics." Some students may respond best to one-on-one, "hothouse atmosphere," high intensity coaching. Others will respond to learning through vocational education, to service learning or to learning through the arts. It is not possible to prescribe one method that will meet the needs of this diverse group of students, developing so rapidly and at such different rates intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally.

It makes no sense that the most developmentally diverse group of students in our entire continuum of schooling is offered the fewest alternatives in schooling. Special schools, comprehensive community schools, work experiences, community service, specialization in vocational, academic, aesthetic and physical programs, schools without walls -- a whole gamut of alternatives should be available to this age group making one of the most critical transitions in life.[12]

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Given the importance of early adolescence, schools for this age group must have a coherent set of purposes and a well-trained corps of professionals staffing them. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is no other level of public education for minors that is so poorly defined and that so obviously needs more extensive and careful policy-setting.

Where do young adolescents go to school? Marketing Data Retrieval (MDR) cites 31 different grade combinations of schools serving young adolescents nationwide, excluding K-6 and 1-6 schools and including schools with grade 6 and/or 8 (they

missed grade 7 only schools using this definition). Within these, as of December 21, 1979, there were the following:

School Grade Organization		Number
Junior highs	7-9	4,004
Comprehensive	7-12	3,662
Middle schools	6-8	3,070
Schools	7-8	2,628
Elementary schools	1-8	1,315
Middle schools	5-8	1,024

These were 19,650 schools for young adolescents other than K-6 or 1-6 elementary schools.[13]

MDR may have missed some combinations, but not many. In North Carolina in school year 1978-79, there were 34 different grade combinations of schools including grade 6 and/or 8, composed of only grade 7, and excluding K-6 and 1-6.[14]

A 1977 survey indicated that the number of middle schools, defined as a school serving at least three grades, no more than five grades, and including grades 6 and 7, had quadrupled since 1967. Middle schools, however, were no more distinguished in program from junior highs, or even from high schools, than in 1967.[15]

In sum, aside from other considerations, the disarray of grade organizations creates serious barriers for intervention strategies by the federal government or the states. Targeting programs for ninth graders, for instance, would require working with 17 different school organizations as to grade. Working with eighth graders would involve 21 different school structures. Working with grades 11-12 requires dealing with only 7. But to exclude grades 7-9 from policy initatives is to exclude over 10 million public school students from their benefits.[16]

Teacher certification and education for this age group are in a state of flux. In 1968 only two states required teacher certification standards for middle schools. In 1977, 27 states had established or were in the process of establishing certification standards for middle school personnel. Special middle school certification, as of 1977, was granted in 15 states. Only one state (Kentucky) issued special certification for middle school administrators. (Nine states are working toward special certification, so these numbers will rise.) Even in states with special middle school certification, teachers with elementary certification are allowed to teach grades 5 and 6 in middle schools and teachers with secondary certification may teach grades 7 and 8.[17]

More important than certification requirements is the quality of pre-service preparation and in-service training that are available to teachers and administrators. I have not been able to ascertain basic information about the preparation of teachers for this testimony. For instance, there are no available figures on the number of teacher preparation programs that offer training in teaching reading for poor readers at the secondary school level.[18] There are over 1,340 institutions of higher learning currently training teachers. Of these, 37 offered degrees in junior high education in 1975-76.[19] A growing number are offering degrees in middle school education. A study now being prepared for NIE on the preparation of teachers of young adolescents should provide this rudimentary information that we do not now have. And again, we will need to be concerned with quality, not just numbers (although in this case, the sheer lack of availability of training presents a serious barrier to good schooling).

There is a cycle of mediocrity that plagues teacher preparation for young adolescents. Teachers enter the classroom inadequately prepared to work with young adolescents and take as their models more experienced teachers who appear to be surviving. Departments of education wishing to break out of traditional elementary or secondary programs for future teachers of young adolescents find few classrooms where their student teachers can practice alternate methods. The practicum experience is therefore less than successful. Also, there are usually no courses offered, much less required, in adolescent growth and development. Future teachers choose between secondary certification, which is highly subject-oriented, and elementary certification, which is more student-oriented but lacks the depth of commitment to disciplines that must enrich classroom experiences for adolescents. Teachers, inadequately prepared, enter the classroom... The cycle of mediocrity is difficult to break into.[20]

Were school districts to break into the cycle through revamping educational programs, they would find only minimal help from the federal effort to disseminate information and provide technical assistance on "educational programs that work." The National Diffusion Network gives local aid to set up programs approved by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel. There are only a handful of programs on basic skills targeted to the young adolescent population, even fewer on educational alternatives, and again, a handful on programs for the "educationally disadvantaged" that involve communication skills, remedial reading, or mathematics. The 1978 edition of Educational Programs That Work lists three programs that link career education with basic skills for the junior high-aged population, only one of which emphasizes dropout prevention.[21] There has been such a serious lack of

attention to this level of schooling for so many years that only concerted efforts at the local, state, and national levels will create the pool of talent, the ideas, the programs, the curricular resources, and the morale to upgrade the quality and expand the options in schooling for young adolescents.

A new educational professional development assistance act similar to EPDA, focusing on middle grade/junior high teachers and administrators, is badly needed. The Middle Schools Needs Assessment conducted in Boston, Mass. in March, 1979 is a case in point. The Middle Schools Task Force asked 1,107 teachers in 27 schools what their primary concerns are. Among the concerns reported are "the impact on the school situation of the stresses of adolescence" and "the need for time for teachers to develop curriculum for an ethnically, cognitively and developmentally diverse student population." Nearly one-half of the teachers say the students do not have adequate reading and writing skills. Two-thirds believe that only half have adequate math skills. Some teachers say that they are not prepared to teach grades 6-8. At the same time, "teachers do not see the need for more training in the teaching of reading, instructional methods, or in methods of accommodating the wide range of student abilities." They want students to have opportunities to learn more about the physical, emotional, and social changes experienced in adolescence; they want clear direction from school administrators; they want a consensus of goals about middle school programs.[22] They want others to change.

There is no question that we must achieve consensus about the purposes of schooling for young adolescents, that we must have strong administrators for their schools, and that we must help young adolescents negotiate their way more comfortably through their rapid, changeable development. But we must also have a cadre of teachers who are prepared to teach basic skills through subject matter, to open up the range of experiences by which young adolescents learn about themselves, their creativity, and their worlds, to promote social well-being, and to meet the wildly diverse needs of this highly variable group of students. Without professional development assistance, we run the risk of acting out an all-too-familiar scenario: we will authorize federal funds for school and work initiatives, programs will be put in place, one-to-three years later they will be evaluated, and once again we will be told that they failed or had disappointingly mixed results and that you "can't throw money at problems." You can't if there's no one out there to use it well. In-service professional development is a prerequisite for the success of any public policy initiative for the later years of elementary education and the early years of secondary education.

In addition to professional development, the creation of centralized networks of information about research and programs concerning young adolescents is essential. Because of the lack of attention paid to this age group and the lack of prestige associated with working with it, "early adolescence" is a nonentity, a non-field. Gaining information about it is agonizing. Statistics are reported in terms of aggregate age groups like "12-24," "17 and under," or "secondary school-age", terms that mask what is happening to the younger adolescent population. Policy-setters as well as researchers and administrators must have access to better disaggregated data if we are to design policies and programs that are appropriate to the needs of young adolescents.

There is a growing network of people dedicated to rectifying this situation, but it receives miniscule support from private foundations and almost none from the federal government. The Center for Early Adolescence, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the first and only center in the nation devoted to young adolescents and the professionals and volunteers who work on their behalf. Cases that come to this field-based center indicate the lack of networks of information and the isolation of caring professionals: the Denver school system is considering switching away from junior high schools to middle schools and has no research information or access to consultants to help with this policy decision; a school administrator in Kentucky needs trustworthy information on good experiential reading programs for young adolescents and can't find out how to find out; principals in junior high schools in Mississippi want a resource person to help them with school discipline problems and don't know where to turn; a research and development firm in California is having trouble identifying after-school programs for young adolescents; a teacher in North Carolina who has a certificate in special education is overwhelmed in her first assignment in a junior high school because she has no background in early adolescent development; a private foundation in Michigan cannot locate information about school/parent programs at the junior high level.

Almost all the requests that come to the Center for Early Adolescence have several factors in common: <u>they have no access or inadequate access to information about successful programs; they lack a base of information about 10- to 15-year-olds; and they lack the personal professional networks that would enable them to know whom to contact for help</u>. The federally sponsored ERIC system for information on education has no indicators for Early Adolescence. Census data are reported in such broad age clusters that it is often necessary to go back to the original tapes for information on young adolescents. <u>We must create easier access to data, program and research information if we are going to improve the state of schooling for young adolescents</u>.

MAJOR POLICY CONCERNS

There are signs that, after almost three decades of neglect, local and national attention is turning slowly to the junior high-aged population. School systems around the country are questioning the wisdom of the 7-9 junior high school grade organization. These are citywide reviews of schooling for young adolescents. (Denver and Boston are notable examples.) There have also been statewide reviews, as in California's Reform in Secondary Education (RISE) program. Agencies of the federal government have begun to show a new level of commitment to schooling for young adolescents, as seen in new categories of funding in research and development in science education for young adolescents at the National Science Foundation, the small but significant amount of attention paid to junior high schools in the National Institute of Education's (NIE's) legislatively mandated review of vocational education, and NIE's present and proposed studies of teacher preparation for middle grade education, local efforts to change from junior high schools to middle schools, exemplary school programs for young adolescents, and desegregation in junior high schools. Especially welcome is the potential commitment to junior high school students evidenced in the White House Initiative on Youth Employment.

All these efforts combined by no means represent a groundswell in public attentiveness to 10- to 15-year-olds, but there is at least the sense of an ice floe shifting, maybe breaking up. For those of us who have been working on behalf of young adolescents in this country to promote their healthy development, the signs are a little encouraging.

When we look at characteristics of early adolescent development, we see the inadequacy of school response to a crucial time in development. We fail on a day-to-day basis in too many of our school efforts because we do not base these efforts on the developmental realities and needs of our students. Likewise, our policies will fail if we do not design them so they are appropriate to the needs of the age group. The critical nature of the developmental tasks during early adolescence requires that we review major youth policy issues to insure our attentiveness to this age group.

John Hill, a distinguished researcher on adolescent development, has called for a "blue ribbon panel" on schooling for young adolescents. The major reports and panels on secondary education in the past decade, including Youth: Transition to Adulthood, The Report of the Panel on Youth, the Report of the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, the report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, and now the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education's report on secondary schools, work and service, all focus on senior

high schools.[23] We have had no major report on junior high schools. As Michael Timpane, currently Acting Director of NIE, has said, "The intellectual chaos surrounding the institutions of intermediate schooling (junior highs and middle schools) is in the United States complete and unique enough to call for a separate intensive nationwide review of their purposes."[24]

In the intensive nationwide review that Timpane recommends, it would be incumbent upon us to make sure we are looking at every pressing educational issue as it impinges on this age group. One area demanding immediate attention is the search for effective schools. What works? We desperately need such information in reference to schools for 10- to 15-year-olds.

In a very modest definition of "effectiveness," Edmonds and Frederiksen have looked for schools that teach poor and/or minority children how to read and compute. An effective school, using their criterion, is one that is at or above the city average grade equivalent in math and reading.[25] Unfortunately, intermediate education is not part of this search. Similarly, the frequently cited study by Weber on schools that successfully teach reading was conducted only in the primary grades.[26] The studies that have been given four-star ratings in the press tell us very little about what we need to know. At the insistence of the Chief State School Officers, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, for instance, was specifically designed so that we cannot draw any conclusions about the effectiveness of individual schools. The Coleman Report determined the influences of school resources on students after controlling for social background characteristics. The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education points out that school factors have greater impact on the achievement of minority group students than on majority students. Coleman's methodology washed out these effects. (Even so, according to the Coleman data, teacher quality is a major determinant of scholastic achievement among black students.)[27]

Tinto and Sherman, reviewing the research on intervention programs to promote equality of educational opportunity, criticize the programs for concentrating on reading and math skills without paying much attention to alternative modes of educational intervention. We have lacked a wide array of program types that employ diverse models of learning and educational attainment.[28] We, therefore, have little information to guide us about intervention strategies that might augment the power of initiatives like ESEA Title I programs.

We are badly in need of studies that tell us about specific programmatic and policy effects for pupils of differing family and social backgrounds at the intermediate level. If, as more and more people are suggesting, we must concentrate on individual schools as the unit of change,[29] then we must know more about the effectiveness of individual schools that serve 10- to 15-year-olds.

There are studies that point the way. For instance, Michael Rutter and his colleagues studied 645,000 students in more than 4,000 schools in London. They were less interested in whether schools lessened gaps in IQ or income inequality, our standard definitions of "effectiveness," than in whether schools have an effect on outcomes like school behavior, delinquency, and passing specific required exams. They found that schools make an enormous difference in achievement and patterns of delinquency.[30] We are desperately in need of such information in the United States.

What makes a school effective in not just desegregating but in integrating its student body? There are several studies that present us with disturbing preliminary data about the difficulties of integration at the junior high school level.[31] We need more help from studies like Classrooms and Corridors: The Crisis of Authority in Desegregated Secondary Schools, which analyzes the strikingly different life in two desegregated junior high schools, one that is in chaos and the other where students learn peacefully in a well administered setting with teachers whose morale is high.[32]

To be effective, a school must establish a climate in which children can learn. As concern about school safety grows, especially at the junior high level, we need to examine not just troubled schools but, even more importantly, orderly schools. Orderly Schools That Serve Children, a report from the Citizens Council for Ohio Schools, is a first step in the right direction.[33] We need more examples of schools where young adolescents are learning so that we can learn from their example.

There are curricular issues that must be resolved in relation to intermediate schooling. They have their origin in developmental phenomena at early adolescence. These areas include reading, health education, vocational education, and career education. One example, and an extremely important one, has to do with mathematics and science.

For some students the decision not to continue taking mathematics occurs as early as seventh grade, when eighth grade algebra becomes optional. This decision carries serious negative consequences, since the "mathematics filter" prevents these students from getting later learning in technical fields. All fields entailing the use of mathematics, including those relying on computer technology, are closed to these young people because of a decision made during early adolescence. This problem is especially acute among women and minorities.[34]

The United States government is spending millions of dollars on equity programs in order to provide equal opportunities for women and minorities in and through public schooling. Special attention needs to be devoted to curricula and counseling

for young adolescents. Mathematics and science, where NSF is able to make a small effort, are only two examples from among many badly in need of help because of what is considered "sex-appropriate" behavior during early adolescence.

The issue of dropout prevention is an interesting one in regard to young adolescents. In October, 1977 (latest figures available) 1.4 percent of 14- and 15-year-olds were dropouts. The figure rose sharply to 8.6 percent for 16- and 17-year-olds.[35] These figures suggest that a prime time for dropout prevention programs is in the junior high schools and intermediate schools, before adolescents turn 16. Estimated retention rates in public and non-public schools indicate that per every thousand pupils who entered fifth grade in 1969 and were or would have been twelfth graders in 1977, schools retained 984 in the ninth grade, 959 in the tenth, 876 in the eleventh, and 789 in the twelfth. (These are cumulative figures.)[36] Again, the first big jump came between ninth and tenth grades, indicating a need for dropout prevention strategies prior to senior high schools.

A look at the federal youth budget is instructive to see whether we are providing the financial resources to meet the needs of young adolescents in schools. In direct services, according to a study by Columbia University's Conservation of Human Resources program, distribution of expenditures to youth between 1964 and 1976 shifted to favor ages thirteen and over as against twelve and under. This shift is explained, according to the study, primarily in demographics because of the growing teenage cohort, not because of new programs or policy initiatives. It is also explained by an increased emphasis on higher education and employment programs for older adolescents.[37]

One-third of all expenditures for youth go to education (16.1 percent) and nutrition (16.7 percent) services. The $4.8 billion in education involves eighteen programs, but activities under ESEA account for nearly $2.2 billion, or 45 percent.[38] ESEA Title I programs, however, have focused predominantly on the early elementary years. As a result, the middle years have been underserved, as youth employment allocations have gone to older adolescents while compensatory education monies have been spent mainly on young children.

Money spent on young children does not obviate the need for special attention in later years. There are learning needs specific to adolescence that cannot be met by earlier intervention. As Larsen and Dittmann argue, special programs should end at grade 3 if our goal is to provide students with grade 3 skills. If we want grade 8 skills, we must provide assistance at least through grade 8.[39]

And it cannot be stressed too often or too strongly that such programs cannot succeed without adequate staffing, including school administrators. Study after study has told us that effective schools are marked by strong administrative leadership. We do not have as talented a pool of administrators at the middle grade level as we do at other levels. If we are going to strengthen the weakest link in public schooling, we will need a new form of Educational Professional Development Assistance (EPDA), this time one that focuses strongly on middle grade administrators and staff.

Finally, youth employment conditions help determine school climate. To be thirteen or fourteen, experiencing for the first time in one's life a sense of one's future and facing a high youth unemployment rate, is to be robbed of an important motivator for learning. Available employment for older youth gives younger adolescents hope.

But hope is not always enough. Young adolescents need to try out different skills, to find out what they feel competent in and enjoy doing, and to make a meaningful contribution to their schools and communities. A nationwide study of 2,000 high school students conducted in the mid-1970's by ACTION and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) found that community service projects had reached a new high in popularity, with 42 percent of high school students involved in some form of community service and an estimated 50 percent employed. The ACTION/NASSP team looked at service and employment opportunities in Portland, Oregon, the D.C. metro fringe, and Sheboygan County, Wisconsin. They found hundreds of volunteer and job opportunities available in schools, hospitals, waste recovery projects, day care centers, sanitariums, senior citizen centers, and the like. The opportunities are there. What is needed is help with transportation, insurance, supervision, and job skills.[40]

This study was conducted only for senior high school students. It is equally appropriate for junior high-aged students, especially in the service sector. In addition, given individual variability in rates of maturing during early adolescence and sub-cultural differences in adult expectations regarding maturity, many junior high-aged students are ready for paid employment experiences and should not have to wait to become "of age," a chronological age that has little bearing on personal and cultural expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, I submit the following recommendations to the subcommittee:

- establish an educational professional development assistance act to upgrade middle school and junior high school administrators and staff

- establish a national panel to review the purposes and practices of intermediate schooling in America
- establish centralized sources of information on data, research, and programs concerning young adolescents for professionals and policy-setters
- establish an array for schooling options that are responsive to the developmental diversity of the young adolescent population
- establish in-school and out-of-school learning, service, and recreation programs that give young adolescents greater access to adults
- fund out-of-school and after-school learning programs for young adolescents in their communities
- identify and study effective, orderly schools for young adolescents
- conduct research on and establish programs to alleviate the special stresses of desegregation in junior high schools
- establish a broad spectrum of programs that teach basic skills to young adolescents through the arts, the humanities, the sciences, the social sciences, health sciences, environmental studies, and vocational education
- provide periodic health screening, diagnosis, and treatment for needy young adolescents as they sustain the physical and emotional stresses of puberty
- provide coordinated health, guidance and social services to students to enhance their physical and emotional well-being as they enter adolescence
- increase the percentage of federal funds allocated to research on early adolescent development, schools, and other service institutions for young adolescents.

In addition, many recommendations of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education in regard to high school youth apply and should be applied to junior high-aged youth:

- make junior high school programs more diverse
- create part-time specialty schools
- break up the big, monolithic junior high school and its deadly weekly routine
- create work and service opportunities for young adolescents
- finance needy students through work-study programs and more effective job placement efforts
- improve the capacity of junior high/intermediate schools to teach basic skills by allocating more federal funds under ESEA to the intermediate grades

- improve teacher training programs, including workplace experiences for teachers.[41]

Most important, beyond the scope of these recommendations, are the living and learning environments that we share with young adolescents. While the human quality of schools cannot be directly legislated, a belief in its attainment must undergird all legislative policy. Literacy and numeracy are essential, but what is most important is that our young people be in caring, respectful environments during all those hours of human interaction in school.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate having the opportunity to submit this review of the status of junior high schools to the Subcommittee.

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